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ABSTRACT

The extent to which history has been and is combined with other subjects dealing with man and society in the secondary school curriculum of West Germany, England, and the Netherlands is discussed. The study looks at arguments for and against subject combinations and the teaching of history as an independent subject, reasons for the determination to combine social studies subjects in the three countries, and the forms these combinations took. The reaction of historians, history teachers, and others to these combinations is discussed. Conditions which must be met if history is to be combined with other subjects in the Netherlands are examined. The study concludes with comparisons, conclusions, and prospects in which the problems of the three countries are compared and some global connections are made. (RM)

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Geschiedenis: een vak apart? (History a Distinct Subject?).

by

Johan Gerhard Toebes

February 26, 1981

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GESCHIEDENIS: EEN VAK APART?

Het probleem van de verbinding van geschiedenis met andere mens- en maatschappijvakken -in het bijzonder maatschappijleer- in het voortgezet onderwijs van de Bondsrepubliek Duitsland, Engeland en Nederland

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor in de letteren
aan de Katholieke Universiteit te Nijmegen,
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus Prof. Dr. P. G. A. B. Wijdeveld,
volgens besluit van het College van Decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op donderdag 26 februari 1981
des namiddags te 2 uur precies

door

JOHAN GERHARD TOEBES

geboren te Amersfoort

krips repro meppel

Summary

The existence of history as an independent subject in secondary schools was threatened at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies. The reason for this was the wish to integrate geography, history, civics and social sciences into one subject under headings such as 'Gemeinschaftskunde', 'Gesellschaftslehre', 'social studies' and 'sociale wereldoriëntatie'. This aim arose in a number of countries and is still pursued today. This study examines the situation in West Germany, England and the Netherlands.

A discussion of integration and theoretical reflection on it has been most intensive in West Germany. In England the actual development of integration in study modules is most advanced. It is self-evident that the situation in the Netherlands should be investigated : as this investigation is of great importance for the further development of political, social and cultural secondary education.

The *question* raised in this study is :

> to what extent is the combination of history with other subjects dealing with man and society, especially social studies, either possible or desirable in secondary education ?

In order to answer this question it was necessary to pose a number of subsidiary questions related to the chosen area of investigation. These subsidiary questions form the framework of the study and they are as follows :

1. What types of subject combinations are there; for what reasons did they gradually become desirable, and what are the arguments, for and against ?
2. What are the reasons for this determination to combine subjects relating to man and society in Germany, England and the Netherlands ?
3. What form did these combinations take ?
4. What was the reaction of historians (especially history teachers) to these combinations; and what was the reaction of others ?
5. What are the arguments for and against education in history as an independent subject ?
6. What conditions must be met if history is to be combined with other subjects in a Dutch context ?

In the first chapter an attempt is made to answer the first subsidiary question. First of all the historical origins of the idea of subject combination is examined. Among others, pedagogues such as Otto, Decroly, Dewey and Blonsky are mentioned. The reason why they and others, who have recently begun to favour combining subjects is twofold : it is of a psycho-pedagogical nature and of a social nature. Those who stress the latter are in favour of a closer relationship between school and everyday life. This social motivation is particularly relevant to secondary education; whereas the psycho-pedagogical motivation relates to primary education. Those opposed to this trend particularly object to the proposition that division into subjects is artificial and refer among other things to new developments in these subjects which point to a greater social involvement. Naturally one finds the opponents especially among history teachers and academic professionals.

The following chapters deal extensively with history as a school subject. In chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 the situation in *West Germany* in respect of subjects combination, is investigated. First an outline is given of the position of history as a subject and of political and social education until 1960. Although German history teaching has always had a political and social function -one thinks of its encouragement of patriotism and the stress laid on cultural tradition- it appears that so far there has hardly been any critical study of German history and their own society as a preparation for life in that society. It could hardly be otherwise since conforming to tradition has long been considered a self-evident virtue.

As this tradition was especially considered to be a spiritual heritage in which art, literature and philosophy -in addition to glorifying the state- were highly valued, interest in their own society, controlled by reason, technology and labour was often absent. This was caused by the Gymnasium-oriented '*Bildungspädagogik*' and the *historicism* connected with it.

The latter trend in the humane sciences which received its main impulse in Germany also influenced history education by way of historical science. The crisis in historicism, which had already appeared much earlier in the sciences, reached historical science as late as in the fifties and sixties. It was not until the latter half of the sixties that the '*Bildungspädagogik*' was called into question. Consequently, the conservative powers with their rejection of modern society, prevailed in Germany for a long time. Propagation of the

'*Exemplarische Methode*' (the method of exemplification), the rise of contemporary history and awakening to the '*Verlust der Geschichte*' ('loss of history') foreshadow a change in history-teaching. The 'Verlust der Geschichte' was the result of what was for Germany the disastrous end of the Second World War, which impaired the nationalistic image of history as well as the belief in progress and traditional values. The announcement of the *Saarbrücker Rahmenvereinbarung* (a framework-agreement between the ministers of education of the German federal states) in 1960 about the reform of the sixth forms of the Gymnasium led to an intensive discussion of the importance of history as an independent subject. History was to merge with geography and social studies into a new subject '*Gemeinschaftskunde*'. Of course differences of opinion arose during the discussion between historians and social scientists, but also among historians (history-teachers) themselves, namely the 'traditional' and the 'modern' historians. The former wanted history maintained as an independent subject to transmit the cultural heritage to the next generation and an extensive historical survey (of western history in particular) was necessary for this. The latter aimed especially at a political and social awakening for which the knowledge provided by such a survey was not really necessary. They also saw the value of cooperation with the social sciences and this coordination could take shape in the schools.

This debate was vigorously reopened in connection with the '*Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien für Gesellschaftslehre*' in 1972/1973. The *Gesamtschulen* (comprehensive schools) in the state of Hessen were given an elaborate plan for an integrated subject '*Gesellschaftslehre*' which entailed a break with the traditional social and cultural subjects, which was more radical than that envisioned in the Gemeinschaftskunde mentioned above.

This syllabus caused an almost national commotion, because of the radical social vision which characterized it and which was inspired by the Frankfurter Schule. In the relevant chapter, the criticism which can be made of the use of history in this integrated Gesellschaftslehre is examined. After attempts elsewhere among others in North Rhine Westpahlia to introduce something similar had failed and also after these guidelines had been made optional in Hesse, history as a subject was reestablished, regaining its lost territory.

The only thing that seemed feasible was cooperation among subjects. The controversy about the Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien did provide an unprecendented revival of interest in history teaching and history didactics. As a result several designs for a curriculum were published which were inspired by new developments in didactics and historical science and in which the relationship with the social sciences was made clearer than before.

In chapter 6, 7 and 8 the developments in respect of the subject combinations in *England* are outlined. The situation in history teaching resembled that in Germany until 1965-1970. In England, too, the emphasis was on political (as well as on constitutional) history and on a chronological survey. There was also a strong national orientation and contemporary history was almost absent. Immediately after the Second World War, a first attempt at 'social studies' appeared as a reaction to the old fashioned history and geography teaching, especially in the newly-founded secondary modern schools. But the old subjects soon regained their former position with the help of organisations like the 'Historical Association'.

In the sixties all sorts of impulses towards a new curriculum were received, partly inspired by American educational developments. Another important impulse in that direction was given by the foundation of the Schools Council, a forerunner of the Dutch SLO (*Stichting voor Leerplan Ontwikkeling*), the Foundation for Curriculum Development.

Furthermore, through the Schools Council a lot of interest was taken in the problem of the 'young school leaver', a problem rendered more acute by the fact that so many children were continuing in secondary education. The traditional subject teaching was not going to be suitable for these young school leavers, because it did not fit in with their actual way of life nor would it be relevant to their jobs. As a consequence, a call for a new kind of social studies was heard again in the latter half of the sixties. Other important stimuli were the introduction of comprehensive schools and the reform of tj the sixth forms (comparable with the highest forms of the Dutch VWO). The most important factor is however the analysis of the *'crisis in the humanities'* as a result of which the position of history as a subject was damaged.

A reason for this was the historicist approach to the past as opposed to the more contemporary orientation of the social sciences. The influence of aspects of this position on history as a science and a subject in the seventies gave the impulse towards a renewal of history as a subject at school. Then the 'New Social Studies' arose, based primarily on sociology.
Although the subject maintained its position on the whole, integrative methods came into existence for young school leavers or slow learners, mostly in the shape of the Schools Council projects. These are analysed in chapter 8. The best-known are : Lawrence Stenhouse's *Humanities Curriculum Project*, Keele University's *Integrated Studies Project*, and *History, Geography and the Social Sciences 8-13*, developed at the University of Liverpool.
In chapters 9, 10 and 11 the situation in *the Netherlands* is described in the following order :

a. a survey is given of history-teaching (from 1863 until the present) with emphasis on recent developments and the importance of them for subject combination.
b. A survey is given of the developments in political and social education, especially of 'maatschappijleer' (social science) as a subject, also in respect to its integrative character.
c. An analysis is made of impulses and attempts to integrate social science subjects in secondary education. This concerns, for example, influences from primary education, developments in lower vocational education and the comprehensive school and some projects, namely the Ledo-project, the NSL-project and the Peace-teaching-project.

Criticism of history-teaching, which for a long time had characteristics similar to those in Germany and England, arose in the beginning of the sixties. Comments were made on the fact that it was little involved with the present. This led to a change in the statutes governing final examinations in history in 1965, as a result of which emphasis came to be placed on contemporary history. The introduction of 'maatschappijleer' as a subject in secondary education as a result of the Secondary Education Act, passed in 1963 (de *Mammoetwet*) was evidence of the authorities' interest in political and social education at school. This subject, however, achieved a somewhat unstable position in secondary education, nor did it acquire the intended integrative character. One need not be afraid, therefore, that history will be threatened

with extinction by the social sciences, this is even less the case because of the previously mentioned emphasis on contemporary history in the old school subject. As the plans for a comprehensive school, in which there is sufficient evidence of ideas in favour of subject integration, have yielded very little, sofar one need fear no danger for the traditional subject from this quarter. In lower vocational education, some form of integration or cooperation obtains between history and geography. The Ledo-project was an important attempt to integrate subjects : history and geography were used in a 'global social orientation'. There was a lot of discontent among histotorians. The project failed however, because it was too far from classroom reality and badly thought out in theoretical and scientific terms.

The book concludes with '*comparisons, conclusions and prospects*' in which the data of the problems in the three countries are compared and some global connections are made in refence to the rise and motivation of subject combination.

When comparing curricula and projects, the classification of curriculum alternatives proposed by the American educationalist Manning is used : 'integrative', 'semi-integrative', 'fusion', 'correlation' and 'seperate subjects', these terms being stages in a line under the heading *subject combination* running from most combined to least combined.

On the basis of the results of the discussions held in the three countries and an analysis of the function of history in contemporary society (from the German Kocka), I plead for a disciplinary *and* cooperative approach to political, social and cultural education. A pragmatic starting point predominates. This is evident in the examples of cooperation among history, geography and social studies which can be carried out within the existing Dutch curricula. Such cooperation requires an institutional basis for the preparation of syllabuses.

A preference for cooperation among these subjects involves putting the political and social educational role of history first. If one proceeds from this view, another choice of material may be necessary in which the contemporary relevance is most important. Starting points for such a new orientation can be found in the draft plan for societal history of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam and in the Lübecker Gruppe curriculum proposal (Rohlfes, 1978).

Attempts at combining subjects can only be succesful if the participants have a good understanding of the nature and the possibilities of their own subject. Then it will be possible to contribute to the enlightenment of young people by means of a distinct subject and by means of a partly integrative or cooperative approach. Consequently the question : 'History, a distinct subject ?' can be answered by yes and no.